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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, our Father who has given us life, bless us this day as we accept the privilege of work. Thank You that the work You have given the Senators and those who work with and for them is crucial for the future of our Nation.

As this intense and busy week comes to a close, we express our gratitude for each Senator's staff, the officers of the Senate and their staffs, the reporters of debates, the media, the pages, the police guards and Secret Service, the elevator operators, the food service personnel, the landscape and maintenance people, and so many others who work so faithfully on hundreds of important tasks. May we take no one for granted and communicate our esteem and affirmation to everyone who works around us.

Today, we especially thank You for Stuart Balderson, Financial Clerk of the U.S. Senate, who has recently retired after faithfully serving this body for 38 years. Bless Stuart and his wife, Marie. May their retirement years continue to be joyful and purposeful. Through our Lord and Savior. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, this morning the Senate will begin 1 hour of morning business. At 10:30 a.m., the Senate will begin the Iran sanctions bill under a time agreement of 3 hours.

It is possible that some time may be yielded back on the sanctions bill, and therefore votes could occur before noon. The Senate will also consider the ISTEA conference report when it becomes available. Therefore, votes could occur throughout Friday's session, in an effort to conclude several important items prior to the Memorial Day recess.

Mr. President, it is my understanding, in conference with the other side, that they are comfortable with allowing two of our 10-minute sessions to occur back to back and to then go to the other side—and I will begin that, but before I do, for just a couple of minutes the Senator from Oregon will speak to express his grief over circumstances in his State.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Might I interrupt my colleague for a second. I know we will hear from the Senator from Oregon to speak about the tragedy in Oregon, and I think his remarks are perhaps the most important remarks of the day.

Might I ask, since we have some order, after the Senator from Oregon speaks, then two Republicans will speak?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). Correct.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Could I ask unanimous consent to have 10 minutes in the sequence after Senator DORGAN?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is asking there be two 10-minute segments?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I would like to speak after Senator DORGAN for 10 minutes.

Mr. ENZI. Could I request permission before that happens to drop in a bill on behalf of myself and Senator BINGAMAN?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator concur with that?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Yes.

Mr. INHOFE. Could we extend that unanimous consent to give me 10 minutes after the Senator from Minnesota?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the time requests?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COVERDELL. I yield 3 minutes of my time to the Senator from Oregon.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, and my colleagues who have allowed me to speak, I thank you for your courtesy.

TRAGEDY IN OREGON

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. President, I rise today with a very heavy heart. Yesterday, Senator WYDEN, my colleague from across the aisle, and I were confronted with news of a tragedy in our State that was, frankly, in my mind, quite unimaginable.

The Willamette Valley of Oregon is perhaps one of the most beautiful places in the world. It is surrounded by mountains with snowcaps and clear streams running through it. It is filled with farmers and loggers, college professors and students, people working in State government. It is truly an Eden on Earth.

But yesterday, a most mindless and senseless act was committed that leaves me, frankly, speechless. A young man, obviously very troubled, on the way to school killed his parents and then took three weapons into his school cafeteria at Thurston High School in Springfield, where he opened up and killed 1 student and injured nearly 30 others. This occurred before a wounded student tackled him and held him to the ground.

I don't have words to express the outrage I feel or the heartache that I feel for the families, for the victims, for this community, for my State, for my country, at this outrageous and despicable act.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Yesterday, Senator WYDEN and I were asked to be on program after program, and we declined, because it was not a day for pontificating about policy or political posturing. It was a day for grief and mourning. I reach out to my State. I cannot be there physically, but my heart is with you and I am in agony with you. It becomes all of us here and in any place in government not to pick a single issue and say that is why, but to look at the strings that run from Springfield to Jonesboro or in any other community in this State and to find out what is happening with the youth of America whereby they solve their problems by resorting to this kind of violence.

We must have the courage to face all of the possibilities. It isn't just the school. It isn't just the gun. It isn't just the family. It isn't any of these things in isolation, but it is all of them together.

I, for one, reach across to my colleague from Oregon, Senator WYDEN, and every other member of the Oregon delegation in this Congress, and to our Governor, and to school officials and to parents in Oregon and across this country and say, let's figure it out and let's try to prevent it from occurring again. This does not belong in America. The answers start with us.

The answers start in our hearts and in our homes, in our legislatures, in this Capitol building, but it starts with us as individuals to find out how to say no to this in the future and to prevent it. We are doing many things to punish, and those are appropriate things. It is time to do more to prevent.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. I thank the Chair.

As Senator SMITH has said, the people of Oregon are grieving this morning. Our hearts are out to them. This is a time when all of us from Springfield, OR, to Springfield, MA, have to take a few moments out from our daily routine and reflect on what has happened in our home State. This is supposed to be a joyous time of year for kids in high school. They think about summer vacations and plans, time with family. Once again, however, our country has been rocked by unspeakable violence. I think all of us know that young people get upset and they do foolish things. But that is not what this is about.

In times past, when young people got angry, they might throw a rock, they might throw a fist, but there was not this pattern of deadly gun violence. And so now it is critically important as we grieve for the people of our home State—my staff has been trying to help, giving blood, assisting others in the community, but it is especially important now to get beyond the kind of finger pointing and the sort of blame game that inevitably takes place here and look to how these tragedies can be prevented in the future.

I share Senator SMITH's judgment that this is about what is in our heart.

It is about taking every possible step in the schools, in the family, through the education and health programs and through law enforcement programs, to protect our citizens and to reach out to those young people in trouble. That way we have a chance to restore safety in our communities and peace of mind for parents who, right now across this country, because of Springfield and the previous tragedies, are going to get up in the morning saying to themselves: What is going to happen at my child's school today? We cannot have that. No Member of the Senate can abide by that. And that, to me, is our central challenge today.

Oregonians have come together in the last 24 hours to do what we always do best, and that is to help friends and neighbors in a time of great need. We have seen an extraordinary outpouring of concern in Springfield towards families. It is not possible to find any real comfort at a time like this, but if you can feel hopeful—we have got to get up every morning working to make this a better world and a safer world—we can take some comfort in knowing that communities like Springfield do work. They are getting up this morning and saying that they are going to try to reach out to everybody in that community, to try to do everything possible to heal in Springfield and our home State but, even more importantly, to do everything they can to make sure that tragedies like this do not happen again in Oregon or anywhere else.

That is what we need to work for in this Chamber. Government policies can help, and with the government being a better partner, and families and schools and communities rallying, as Springfield has, we can make a difference and we can stop this carnage in our schools.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate have a minute of silence in the Chamber in deference to the remarks of the two Senators from Oregon, and then the Senate would proceed with the hour of morning business beginning at that point.

(There being no objection, the Senate observed a moment of silence.)

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for not to exceed 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

ISTEA

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on the con-

ference report on H.R. 2400, the ISTEA reauthorization legislation. I regret that I am unable to be here to vote on this important piece of legislation, but I must depart momentarily to speak to the 25th Anniversary Reunion of Vietnam-Era Prisoners of War in Dallas, Texas.

If I were able to record my vote, however, I would vote against this conference agreement. This legislation is likely the most pork-laden legislation ever to be considered by Congress in the 20th Century. This conference report should be defeated, despite the inclusion of many important and commendable provisions.

I cannot support this conference report despite the fact that it does include significant motor carrier, highway and boating safety initiatives developed by the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The Commerce Committee conferees, Senator HOLLINGS, Senator STEVENS, and I, worked diligently and responsibly to ensure that effective truck safety inspection and enforcement activities are continued, that safety initiatives on motor vehicle occupant protection are created, and that recreational boating activities are advanced.

The Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation portion of the conference report also requires the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) to change existing passenger car air bag standards so that the risks air bags pose to infants, children, and other individuals are minimized. I also want to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to Senator KEMPTHORNE. Without his involvement, I doubt our efforts to improve passenger car air bags would have succeeded as they did.

Yet despite these notable achievements, I regret I cannot support the ISTEA reauthorization conference report. I object for several key reasons: the budgetary offsets, donor state inequity, and pork barrel spending.

On April 2nd, I reluctantly voted for an amendment sponsored by Senators DOMENICI, LOTT, and CRAIG on the Balanced Budget Act which proposed to transfer approximately \$10.5 billion over five years from the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans' tobacco-related diseases to pay for the transportation reauthorization legislation. In part, I did this because I believe that the tobacco companies, rather than the taxpayers, should bear the burden for veterans' tobacco-related diseases caused partially by smoking and using other tobacco products while they were in military service.

Military service did not force servicemembers to smoke, but I do acknowledge that for morale reasons, the services made cigarettes available for free or at inexpensive prices. The services also give servicemembers condoms and birth control pills at no cost to military personnel, but that does not mean that they want our men and women in uniform to be promiscuous.